Discourse practices in preschool

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2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY SOCIODRAMATIC PLAY[16]

ABSTRACT

In this paper we study the beginnings of sociodramatic play. We examine the pretend play interactions of a Dutch girl, Peggy, and focus on her transition into sociodramatic play. Initially, Peggy interprets only some elements of her play interactions at the pretend level. At age 2;9 Peggy shows symbolic substitution for *objects* and *actions*. In the course of seven months, the features *participants*, *roles* and *place* gradually become substituted and specified at the pretend level in Peggy's play. In the earlier play interactions, Peggy and her interaction partner keep a discourse identity and only assign new meaning to objects and to their local acts. In a later play interaction, Peggy and her play mate take roles and interpret their situated identities in the pretend layer. The use of situated identities allows for a range of possible acts and a sociodramatic story line, which increases the complexity of the pretend play.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sociodramatic play, or character play, is pretend play with characters and their accompanying roles, behaviors and mental states. Before children create sociodramatic play, they engage in 'ordinary' pretend play: play with symbolic substitution, but no character roles. Symbolic substitution is substituting certain elements of an interaction with a new meaning, for example: pretending a block is a car or pretending a cup contains tea. Sensory-motor games and routine interactions are precursors of pretend play (Leslie, 1987; Singer & Singer, 1990) and early forms of pretend play with might take a routine format, like the *give-and-take* routine (Deunk, Berenst & de Glopper, 2007). Sociodramatic play is too complicated to take the format of a routine. This does not mean the play is not loosely rule-governed, since children need to negotiate the rules and the course of the activity during the play. Negotiating joint activities in pretend play seems to be more difficult for children than coordinating other types of play, like constructive play (Budwig, Strage & Bamberg, 1986), because it requires children to interpret pretence as well.

Children are reported to start to engage in pretend play interactions from around age 2;0 (for example Bosco, Friedman & Leslie, 2006; Harris, 2000; Howes & Matheson, 1992; Lillard & Witherington, 2004), but this early pretend play is not sociodramatic play yet. Early pretend play tends to be shorter in duration and about different topics than sociodramatic play. According to Harris (2000) pretence at 2 or 3 years of age is often short and fluid, although some children do create a sustained

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pretence, in the form of an imaginary friend. Also the themes of pretend play are related with age: young children are found to use mostly domestic themes in comparison to more adventurous or fantastic themes (Halliday-Scher, Urberg & Kaplan-Estrin, 1995). Sociodramatic play and metacommunication in play seem to emerge between 3;0 and 3;6 years of age. Through sociodramatic play, children can practice taking different roles and experience the outcome of varying scenarios. There are several studies focusing on aspects of sociodramatic play in children between 3 and 6 years old (see for example Blum-Kulka, Huck-Taglicht & Avni, 2004; Elias & Berk, 2002; Halliday-Scher et al., 1995; Pellegrini & Galda, 1998; Sawyer, 1993).

Character play is thus more complicated than earlier forms of pretend play, among others because it is more extended, less dependent on routines and requires more symbolic substitution. Before children start to engage in sociodramatic play, they engage in play with pretend actions and objects. Previous research has focused on either early forms of pretence or on sociodramatic play. In this paper we will focus on the transition from early pretence into sociodramatic play. Our research questions are: *what does early sociodramatic play looks like* and *how does the transition into early sociodramatic play take place?*

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Interpreting pretence

A key feature of pretend play is that it is non serious or non literal. There are different (related) models describing the distinction between here-and-now serious interaction and pretend non-serious play interaction. Harris (2000) gives a extensive account of the development of pretence. Two other important theories are Goffman's (1974) frame analysis and Clark's (1996) notion of layeredness. We will describe Harris' four features of pretence first and then turn to Goffman and Clark, whose notions are the basis of this paper.

Harris conducted several experiments to study children's appreciation of pretence (summarized in Harris, 2000). He argues that (joint) pretence consists of four elements: *pretend stipulations*, *causal powers*, *suspension of objective truth* and *unfolding causal chain*. First, the child needs to understand acts of symbolic substitution, for example tilting a teapot above a cup, means pouring tea into the cup. Second, the child needs to assume that the substituted or stipulated elements of the pretence have the same features as their real counterparts. For example, real tea is hot, so pretend tea is too and spilling pretend tea will make the floor pretend wet. Third, the child needs to ignore the 'objective' truth temporarily. For example, when pretend tea is poured in a cup, the cup is full even though the cup is really empty. Fourth, pretence actions built on each other. For example, one can drink from the (objectively

empty) teacup only after one pretended to pour tea in it and drinking the pretend tea will quench your make-believe thirst. Especially Harris' third element of pretence, suspension of objective truth, needs some elaboration, because it connects to Goffman's and Clark's ideas, which we will discuss next. Harris argues that when children are engaged in pretence, they process information in a different way and "they stop scanning the immediate environment for situations that literally fit the utterances being produced or ways to comply literally with the requests that are being made" (Harris, 2000, p.22). In addition, Harris introduces the notion of *mental flags*. He hypothesizes that children add markers for an *alternative interpretation* of the environment during the course of the play. So when a child sees someone pretend to pour tea in a cup, s/he marks the empty cup as containing tea and s/he will use this flagged information to make sense of the next action when the interaction partner pretends to drink by holding the teacup to his/her mouth. Mental flags are thus superimposed on reality.

According to Goffman (1974), frames are a device for making sense of the world. He defined frames as the principles of organization that govern (social) events and people's involvement in those events. Events can be divided in strips, which are pieces from a stream of ongoing activity. People assign meaning to otherwise meaningless events by applying primary frameworks. A *social* primary framework helps to understand events that are guided by somebody's will, aim and control. The person who is performing a social event is judged on this by social norms. The social frameworks that a group uses are part of the culture of that group. People use these frameworks to make sense of events and to interpret the world.

Primary frameworks give meaning to otherwise meaningless events, but sometimes meaningful events have to be interpreted with another meaning and that is when *keys* are used. When two children are for example playing house, a strip of domestic behavior is transformed into a strip of play. Important is that all participants know that this transformation occurred and everybody will thus be able to interpret the event as play. People can transform events and interpret transformed events correctly by using keys. A key is a set of conventions by which a given activity (which is already meaningful in itself) is transformed into something that is patterned like the original activity but is interpreted as something else. There are different kinds of keys helping to establish and interpret different kinds of transformations. The most relevant key for the current study is the key for *make believe*. Goffman categorizes *playfulness*, *fantasy* and *dramatic scriptings* as make believe. Children's pretend play is part of the subcategory fantasy.

Meaningful events can get new meaning by transformation. Each transformation adds a layer or lamination to the activity. The outermost layer (also

called the *rim* of the frame) reflects the status of the activity in the real world. The innermost layer is the most direct meaning of the event. For example when two children play house the rim is *two children engaging in pretend play* and the innermost layer is *father and mother making dinner*. Goffman's idea of layering is one of the bases of Clark's notion of layered interaction.

According to Clark (1996), pretend play is a form of layered interaction. Actions in a layered interaction can be interpreted at multiple levels. To understand the pretend play, participants must appreciate the layers and jointly imagine the 'pretend' layer. Layer 1 is the base (or real world) and layer 2 is the theatrical stage (or pretend world). More layers are possible. In Goffman's (1974) terms: layer 1 is the rim of the frame and layer 2 is a more inward layer. An example of a pretend play interaction described in layers (this example is based on an interaction we will discuss later):

Layer 1: Peggy and Alex are playing together
Layer 2: Two helpers are fixing a boat

In the real world (layer 1) Peggy and Alex are playing make believe together. In the staged pretend world (layer 2) they are two helpers fixing a boat. The actions of the children in the real world are interpreted differently in the pretend world and objects from the real world have substituted meanings in the pretend world. In other words, elements in layer 1 are treated as something else in layer 2 (they are symbolically substituted). The correspondence between the two layers is jointly negotiated and established. Also the utterances of the participants have to be interpreted in one of the multiple layers. Words can have different meaning in the different layers. Deictic elements like *I*, *you*, *here* and *now* have different meanings at different levels (Clark, 1996). For example, if Alex says *you* to Peggy he might refer to Peggy his classmate who is playing with him (layer 1) or to the helper who is fixing a boat with him (layer 2). In a fully layered pretend play interaction the layers of interaction are distinguished by *participants*, *roles*, *place*, *time*, *objects* and *actions*. In Clark's scheme, 'time' is taken literally, it indicates the (approximate) date at which the play takes place. At level 1 this is the current date, at level 2 this can be sometime in the past or present, for example in the middle ages. The reader should not confuse Clark's notion of time as the setting of the play with *imaginary past* within the unfolding play episode. Imaginary past can be used as a key to indicate that the interaction should be interpreted at the pretend level. It can also be used to distinguish specific types of talk within the pretend play episode. We will elaborate on imaginary past in the next paragraph.

2.2.2 Framing or staging play

When two interaction partners are involved in play, they know that their actions are to be interpreted as play and not as 'serious'. They have to understand that their interaction is layered and that some actions and utterances are to be interpreted in the 2nd pretend layer. There are ways to signal in which mode the interaction takes place. *Activity type* and *keying* are contextualizing features that give interaction partners cues as to what to expect in a conversation. In preschool, the specific activity type, such as free play or arts-and-crafts, is set by the teacher. Also factors like duration and timing of the activity and objects that are allowed to be used are usually determined by the teacher. So, being in preschool, having free play time, being in a specific location and handling specific objects, externally frames pretend play (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989). Activity type sets an external frame for interaction because it influences the situation in which the interaction takes place and this might influence the interaction itself.

Interaction partners can also provide cues for how to interpret the play themselves. *Keying* (Goffman, 1974), also called internal or secondary framing, is signaling how to interpret the actions in an interaction. Whereas the external frame is set by the teacher, keying is done by the interaction partners themselves (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). A key consist of a set of conventions used for interpretation. Keying helps participants to interpret each others moves as being something different from the literal interpretation. Rekeying is shifting the nature of the interaction from a non literal interpretation to another interpretation. An interaction can for example shift from pretend play into an argument. In Clark's (1996) terms, rekeying is moving from one layer to another and according to Harris (2000), rekeying would be adding or removing mental flags.

Interaction partners in pretend play need to do more than just signaling that the interaction is to be interpreted as pretend. If they want to engage in pretend play, they need to *share* a pretend frame: they will have to construct the elements of the 2nd layer together or at least know that they will use the same pretend interpretation. Sawyer (1993) assumes that younger children approach play from their own play frame and the mutual play therefore consist of multiple frames. As children get older, they are better able to combine the individual frames and adapt them to each other. There are several metacommunicative tools to adapt different frames to each other in one play.

2.2.3 Pretend play and metacommunication

There are different ways of communicating ideas about the play frame. In sociodramatic play, it is important to establish and reinforce the different roles of the interaction partners. An implicit way of doing this is using character-appropriate

speech. A more explicit way is using proper names. By addressing a play partner with a certain name, a role is assigned or emphasized (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). Using proper names can help children to structure pretend play and to adjust the play if interaction partners have different ideas about details of the play. Other ways of communicating the play frame are explicit instruction, using past tense, moving between frames and using character appropriate speech.

Older preschoolers (children around age 5) are found to explicitly signal going into pretend play by saying things like 'let's do as if' and 'let's pretend'. These children might also use past tense verbs to indicate a pretend frame. Blum-Kulka and colleagues describe the use of *imaginary past*, based on a Hebrew paper of Henkin (1991, see Blum-Kulka, 2005; Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). Imaginary past can be used to refer to different parts of the pretend play. The authors distinguish 1) *imaginary performative-past*, used to verbalize what is currently happening in the play, for example saying "*and then I had to go to the hospital"* while walking towards the pretend hospital; 2) *imaginary future-past*, used as stage directions, for example assigning character roles by saying *"I was the baby and you were the mummy"*; and 3) *imaginary pas-past*, used to refer to the past within the pretend play, for example when one character tells another what happened some time ago within their pretend world.

2.2.4 The developmental role of pretend play

There are different ideas on the developmental functions of pretence. Pretence is thought to play a role in socio-emotional, cognitive and language and literacy development. Pretend play gives children the opportunity to experience things they would otherwise not experience. In this new pretend world, children can experiment with language, behavior, social roles and social conventions. Through role play children can take another persons point of view and so develop their Theory of Mind and other social and emotional skills (Aronsson & Thorell, 1999; Elias & Berk, 2002; Harris, 2000; Lillard, 1993; Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). Role play can also give children the opportunity to experiment with vocabulary and genres they might not use in their ordinary daily life (Aukrust, 2004). Pretence is also thought to be important for learning how to understand and participate in connected discourse (Harris, 2000). To process a narrative, people create a mental model of the narrated situation in their minds, using general knowledge. They take the viewpoint of the main character and adapt the model as new information is given in the narrative (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Zwaan, Langston & Graesser, 1995). Harris argues that children create similar mental models when they are engaging in pretend play. Pretend

play might help children to learn how to build mental models, and therefore prepare children for the later understanding of connected discourse.

2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

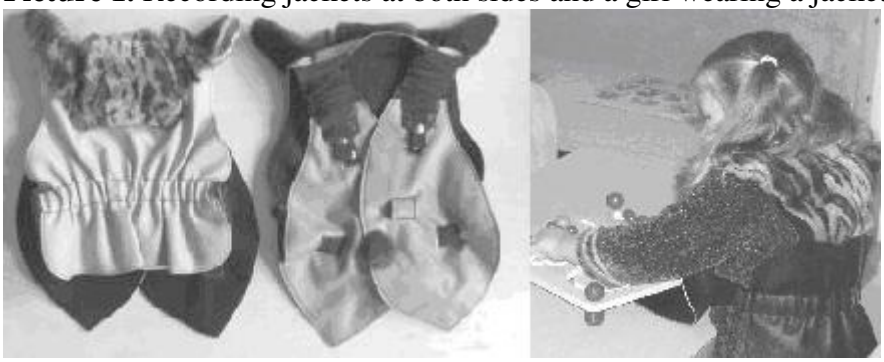
As we described in the previous paragraph, pretend play is an important activity in preschool and plays a role in socio-emotional, cognitive and language development. Despite the fact that pretend play is widely studied, to our knowledge, the development from symbolic substitution to sociodramatic play is not yet thoroughly addressed. A notable exception is made by Harris (2000). According to him, children can engage in sociodramatic play by using *simulation*. According to Simulation Theory, people explain behavior of others not by using a (folk psychology) theory, but by 'experiencing' how they would react themselves if they where that other person (Gordon, 1992; Harris, 1992). In sociodramatic play, the character role is created by "feeding pretend input into the child's own knowledge and planning mechanisms" (Harris, 2000, p.35). This means that children use their understanding of pretense (which they developed at an earlier age) and combine it with their own world knowledge and they process this information in their own system to determine the reactions and behavior of the character they are pretending to be. We agree with Harris that earlier forms of pretense are important for later sociodramatic play, but instead of viewing early pretense as *input* for sociodramatic play, we propose an alternative mechanism in which early play *transforms into* sociodramatic play. We hypothesize that this transition is gradually: more and more features will be substituted, leading to sociodramatic play. To gain insight in the beginnings of sociodramatic play, we examine the pretend play interactions of a girl between 2;9 and 3;4 years old. We redefine the research questions we formulated in the introduction as follows: *what are the characteristics of early sociodramatic play?* and *what elements of pretend play are symbolically substituted in the transition into early sociodramatic play?*

2.4 DATA

The data used in this article are drawn from a broader study investigating pragmatic development in preschool. In this longitudinal project, 25 children are followed from 2;6 to 4;0 years old in their preschool. The children's interactions during the day at preschool are recorded every three months. Recordings are made with a recording device that is sown into a little jacket. Individual audio recordings for every focal child and an overview video recording are made. Picture 1 shows the recording jackets from both sides (left) and a child wearing a jacket in preschool (right). The

recording device is hidden underneath the 'fur' at the back to make the recordings as unobtrusive as possible.

Picture 1. Recording jackets at both sides and a girl wearing a jacket in class



We use the pretend play interactions of "Peggy" to answer our research questions. Peggy comes from a middle to highly educated family. She has one older and two younger sisters. There were no problems in her early development, as reported by the parents in a short questionnaire. Peggy attends a preschool in a middle sized town in the North of the Netherlands which uses the literacy promoting program *Boekenpret* (related to Bookstart, Booktrust, 2009). The main aim of this program is to stimulate literacy development (van den Berg & Middel, 1996; van der Pennen, 2001). We studied Peggy's early play during a 7 month period, from 2;9 to 3;4 years of age and described her interactions with discourse analytic concepts.

Peggy's corpus consists of recordings of 8 mornings and afternoons in preschool. Mornings and afternoons last approximately three hours, so in total the corpus contains 24 hours of Peggy's interactions at preschool. We have recordings of Peggy the ages 2;9, 2;11, 3;1 and 3;4. The data contain 21 episodes (total duration: 47 minutes) of interactions in which there were verbal signs of symbolic substitution. In addition there were 4 episodes (12 minutes) of solitary play in which Peggy's verbal behavior indicated symbolic substitution. The interaction partner during the pretend play was in 8 cases a peer (29,5 minutes), in 11 cases an adult (15,5 minutes) and in 2 cases a mix of both children and an adult (2 minutes). There is a striking difference between the number and total duration of play interactions at age 2;9 and at the other ages. The corpus is summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Description of pretend play episodes in Peggy's corpus

Age Peggy	*Nr of pretend play eps.*,***	*Nr of episodes of pretend play **interactions***			
		Total	*with peer*	*with teacher*	*with peers and teach.*
2;9	14 (31)	12 (30)	3 (14,5)	8 (14)	1 (1)
2;11	4 (2,5)	4 (2,5)	1 (1)	2 (1)	1 (1)
3;1	3 (13,5)	2 (4)	2 (4)	0 (-)	0 (-)
3;4	4 (12)	3 (10,5)	2 (10)	1 (0,5)	0 (-)
Total	**25 (59)**	**21 (47)**	**8 (29,5)**	**11 (15,5)**	**2 (2)**

* Number of pretend play episodes during two mornings and/or afternoons in preschool, in approximately 6 hours of recording.

** In between brackets the total duration in minutes of the pretend play episodes[17].

2.5 RESULTS

2.5.1 Layering of early pretend play

At age 2;9, Peggy engages in pretend play episodes in which she and her interaction partners use symbolic substitution. Excerpt 1 is an example of such a pretend play episode. In this excerpt, Peggy (2;9) offers her teacher Miss Laura a clay object to eat.

(1) "You can eat that" [Peggy (2;9), Miss Laura]

	Speaker	*Transcript*	*Dutch Original*
1	Peggy:	*((holds out clay))* you can eat that	die mag je opeten
2		(0,7)	(0,7)
3	Peggy:	you can	die mag je
4	Miss L.:	(0,4) *((crouches next to Peggy.))*	(0,4)
5	Peggy:	you can eat that	die mag jij opeten
6	Miss L.:	(2,1) *((pretends to eat))*	(2,1)
7	Peggy:	all [of it!	hele[maal!
8	Miss L.:	[m:: tasty. *((looks at Peggy and pulls her towards herself))* yes, I ate it all, eh (.) and I will get nauseous if I'll have to eat more	[m:: lekker hoor↑ (.) ja ik heb het helemaal opgegeten hoor (.) >en anders word ik misselijk als ik nog meer moet eten

[17] Durations are measured in minutes, rounded per half a minute. We feel it would be unreliable to give more precise durations, since (play) interactions are fluid and it is often not clear what the exact boundaries of an interaction are. Because of the rounding on half minutes, the durations of the last three columns do not always add up exactly.

Excerpt #1 is an example of an early and relatively simple form of pretend play. The play is structured by a give-and-take routine (Deunk et al., 2007). The interaction is not fully layered. As we described earlier, Clark (1996) schematizes layering of different elements in the interaction: *participants*, *roles*, *place*, *time*, *features* and *actions*. In Peggy and Miss Laura's interaction, *features* and *actions* are substituted with a new meaning. The clay object is represented as something edible, *holding out clay* is interpreted as *offering food* and when Laura makes eating gestures, this is taken as *eating*. The elements *roles* and *place* are reinterpreted at a basic level in this interaction. The roles in the play are the routine roles of giver and taker. Also the classroom has a slightly different but not fully specified meaning: it is now a place in which food can be offered and eaten. In the real world children do not eat things in class when it is not lunchtime. The play is therefore staged in a place different from the real world classroom, but the nature of this location is not clearly established. The elements *time* and *participants* are not overtly reinterpreted in the play. Peggy is Peggy and Miss Laura is Miss Laura and the activity takes place in the here and now[18]. The amount of layering in excerpt 1 is schematized in table 2.

Table 2. Layering in excerpt 1: "You can eat that"

	Real world (layer 1)	*Pretend Play #1 "You can eat that" (layer 2)*
Participants	*Peggy*	Peggy
	Miss Laura	Miss Laura
Roles	*Players at make-believe*	Giver and taker
Place	*Classroom*	Somewhere where food can be offered and eaten
Time	*Now*	Now
Features/objects	*Clay object*	Something edible
Actions	*Holding out clay object*	Offering food
	Making eating gestures	Eating food

As we already pointed out, the participants in this excerpt do not take new specific identities or roles. Their roles in this play are divided very basically as 'giver' and 'taker'. The discourse identities (Zimmerman, 1998) of *giver* and *taker* shape the

[18] The play episode itself is not placed in another time than the current time. *Within* the play, Miss Laura does refer to another time: by saying *I ate it all* (line 8) she refers to her pretend act in the recent past. This use of imaginary past is interesting in the analysis of the developing pretend play, but is not relevant for the layering of the interaction, since according to Clark, the feature *time* refers to the setting of the overall pretend episode, not to tense shifts within the play.

interaction because Miss Laura and Peggy orient to these identities. Discourse identities determine what the partners are doing at a certain point in the interaction. This is linked to the moment-by-moment organization of the interaction. Taking a discourse identity implies projecting another discourse identity onto the interaction partner. For example, taking the discourse identity of *someone who does an offer* projects the identity of *someone who takes an offer* to the interaction partner. Situated identities are created on the basis of discourse identities and form a framework to which participants orient themselves in the interaction (Zimmerman, 1998). The identities of 'giver' and 'taker' can be seen as discourse identities or as very basic situated identities. The roles of 'giver' and 'taker' in the give-and-take routine could be seen as basal situated identities because the roles are constant during the interaction. However, the identities of 'giver' and 'taker' are not real character roles yet and do not have implications for other relevant acts in the interaction.

The play is not sociodramatic in nature because Peggy and Laura do not take character roles as situated identities and they do not enact a real story. Although the play is not sociodramatic, the interaction is more than just functional play. What makes the interactions pretence is the fact that objects and actions are layered. A real world object like clay is interpreted as food in the pretend layer. The same counts for actions: an action like holding out clay is interpreted as offering food. The interaction is a pretend play interaction because Miss Laura accepts Peggy's offer and treats the clay as edible by pretending to eat it in line 6. If Miss Laura would have said something like "that's pretty, but clay is not for eating!" the interaction would not have developed into pretend play. The play is jointly constructed because Miss Laura pretends to eat the clay. Peggy and Miss Laura use substituted objects or actions and are therefore engaging in symbolic play. They are able to jointly create the symbolic elements and stage them at layer 2 without explicitly talking about the play or organizing the pretend elements.

2.5.2 Towards early sociodramatic play

In the previous section we described how Peggy at 2;9 years old engaged in pretend play with her teacher and we showed that she is able to actively incorporate pretence elements in a joint activity. As Peggy gets older, her pretend play develops. Peggy gradually loses the need for a routine to frame her play, the possible topics of play broaden and she starts enact situated identities in her play. In the following excerpt, Peggy plays with 3-year-old Nicole. The girls are in the "house area". Both have a toy telephone and are pretending to make a telephone call.

(2) "Daddy on the phone" [Peggy (3;1), Nicole (3;0)]

	Speaker	*Transcript*	*Dutch Original*
1	Peggy:	I have (still) *((holds receiver to her ear, talks to Nicole))*	ik heb nog
2		(0,6) *((Peggy and Nicole look at each other))*	(0,6)
3	Peggy:	I have	ik heb
4		(1,1)	(1,1)
5	Peggy:	I have (.) daddy on the phone	ik heb (.) >papa aan de lijn
6		(2,9) *((Peggy and Nicole look at each other. Nicole takes a receiver and holds it to her ear))*	(2,9)
7	Nicole:	(and) I (m) have my mummy	(e) (.) ik m heb mijn mama
8		(1,5)	(1,5)
9	Peggy:	I have my mummy on the phone too	ik heb mijn: mama ook >aan de lijn<
10		(7,7) *((Peggy and Nicole are standing with the receivers at their ears. After a while Peggy starts pushing the buttons of her phone))*	(7,7)
11	Nicole:	thanks *[[unclear]] ((puts down receiver))*	dan(k u weer)
12	Peggy:	yes *((puts down receiver))*	ja

Peggy initiates the pretend interaction by telling Nicole that she has her daddy on the phone. The realistic prop (the telephone) is relatively easy to use in the pretend play. Saying you have your parent on the phone however requires a more difficult 'ideational' transformation (imagining instead of substituting). Nicole accepts Peggy's initiation by performing a similar action: she takes another phone and tells Peggy she has her mother on the phone. Peggy replies that she has her mother too. The children add coherence to their interaction by using repetition and by varying each others utterances (Budwig et al., 1986). Nicole closes the episode by putting down the receiver. Peggy accepts this action by imitating Nicole's action and agreeing verbally. The children have no chance to reinitiate the play or to shift the topic because Miss Laura announces they will have lunch and with that she rekeys the situation and externally closes it.

Objects and actions are symbolically substituted in excerpt 2, like in excerpt 1. Peggy and Nicole pretend the phones are real working phones and by holding the receivers to their ears they are pretending to be calling. Peggy and Nicole are still 'themselves' in the play and the roles they take are not fully defined, although the identity of 'caller' influences their actions in the play. The identity of 'caller' is more fully defined than the identities of 'giver' and 'taker' in excerpt 1, but is still rather basic and unspecific. The location of the play is substituted in a basic way, like in excerpt 1. In the play, the house area is a place where one can make phone calls, whereas in the real life classroom, the children cannot make phone calls. The layering in the 2nd play fragment is summarized in table 3.

Table 3. Layering in excerpt #2: "Daddy on the phone"

	Real world (layer 1)	*Play #2 "Daddy on the phone" (layer 2)*
Participants	*Peggy*	Peggy
	Nicole	Nicole
Roles	*Players at make-believe*	'callers'
Place	*Classroom, house area*	Somewhere where you can make phone calls
Time	*Now*	Now
Features/objects	*Real phone for play*	Working phone
Actions	*Holding receiver to ear*	Calling daddy/mummy

2.5.3 Early sociodramatic play

In the previous section we described how Peggy engages in pretend play interactions and how she increasingly substitutes elements in her play. In the following fragment, Peggy engages in pretend play in which she and her partner create some kind of a storyline and in which they are not 'themselves' but play they are somebody else. In this fragment, Peggy (3;4) and Alex (3;7) are engaging in sociodramatic play. They are playing together at an indoor climbing object and pretend the climbing object is a boat they have to fix. It is the day after the Dutch national celebration of 'St. Nicolas', a saint similar to Santa Claus. St. Nicolas arrives in the Netherlands from Spain by boat. He gives children presents and has helpers called 'Piet'. Peggy and Alex are playing they are Piets who are fixing St. Nicolas' boat.

(3a) "Fixing the boat", excerpt "Thanks Piet" [Peggy (3;4), Alex (3;7)]

	Speaker	*Transcript*	*Dutch Original*
1	Peggy:	can I have the drill?	mag ik de boor ehen?
2	Alex:	(0,6) *((turns towards Peggy))*	(0,6)
3	Alex:	ye:s	ja:
4	Alex:	(0,5) *((gives Peggy the drill))*	(0,5)
5	Peggy:	thanks	dankje
6	Peggy:	(0,4) *((takes the drill))*	(0,4)
7	Peggy:	Piet	Piet
8	Peggy:	(1,4) *((starts to drill))*	(1,4)
9	Alex:	er (.) you have to	ey (.) jij moet
10		(0,5)	(0,5)
11	Alex:	say thanks (.) climbing-piet	dank je (.) klimpiet zeggen
12	Peggy:	(0,5) *((looks at Alex))*	(0,5)
13	Peggy:	thanks cimbing-piet	dank je kimpiet

Peggy and Alex are playing they are fixing St. Nicolas' boat. They are not fixing the boat as themselves, but as St. Nicolas' helpers. By addressing Alex with 'Piet' (line 7), Peggy reinforces Alex' role in the play. By doing this she helps to construct Alex' situated identity. In other words, Peggy and Alex are substituting Alex' 1st layer identity with the pretend identity of 'Piet' and by saying "thanks Piet" to Alex, Peggy reinforces the *roles* they play. Alex accepts this role/identity, but his play frame appears to be slightly different from Peggy's: in his mind he is not just a Piet, but he is a special climbing-Piet. In lines 9-11, we can see how using proper names can help children to structure pretend play and to adjust it, if interaction partners have different ideas about details of the play. It also illustrates how children can create a shared play frame by explicit instruction. Alex explicitly tells Peggy what she has to say ("you have to say thanks climbing-Piet"). Alex thus interrupts the play in order to give his instruction. Peggy accepts this instruction and repairs her previous utterance by now saying "thanks climbing-Piet" instead of "thanks Piet".

Peggy and Alex not only take local discourse identities in this interaction, but also situated identities. Alex' situated identity as climbing-Piet is constant during the interaction and influences what is relevant for him to do. The pretend situated identity or role shapes the interaction and turns the pretend play into sociodramatic play.

Fragment 3 "Fixing the boat" is not only distinct from the fragments 1 and 2 because of the character roles, but the play is also more extended. In another segment of the interaction 3 "Fixing the boat" we can see that the substitution of objects is more advanced than in the previous interactions.

(3b) "Fixing the boat", excerpt "Thermometer" [Peggy (3;4), Alex (3;7)]

	Speaker	*Transcript*	*Original*
57	Alex:	can I have something?	mag ik wat hebben?
58	Alex:	(0,3) *((lies on the 2nd floor and reaches down))*	(0,3)
59	Peggy:	which one then?	welke dan?
60		(0,3)	(0,3)
61	Alex:	er (.) that pliers	e:m (.) die tang
62		(7,3) *((Peggy gives Alex a wrench and Alex starts to tinker))*	(7,3)
63		*… (14 lines skipped. During this period Alex tinkers and Peggy saws. After a while Alex throws down his wrench, which falls behind Peggy. Alex then asks Peggy for the drill, which he uses for a short while and then gives back to her).*	…
78	Alex:	can I have	mag ik even
79		(0,5)	(0,5)
80	Alex:	the	de
81		(0,5)	(0,5)
82	Alex:	thermometer?	thermometer?
83		(0,6) *((Peggy looks up to Alex.))*	(0,6)
84	Peggy:	thermometer? (.) where is it then?	thermometer? (.) waar is die dan?
85		(0,3) *((Alex looks down))*	(0,3)
86	Alex:	er there	em daar
87		(0,5)	(0,5)
88	Alex:	behind you	achter je
89	Peggy:	(1,2) *((turns and takes the wrench.))*	(1,2)
90	Peggy:	this one?	dehe?
91	Peggy	(1,1) *((shows the wrench))*	(1,1)
92	Alex	y::es (.) that therm:ometer	j::a (.) die therm:ometer

The play interaction of Peggy and Alex is a nice example of the increasing complexity of symbolic substitution of objects. In fragment 1, Peggy and Miss Laura substituted a

clay object for something edible. In fragment 2, Peggy and Nicole made the relatively easy substitution of a toy phone for a real phone. In fragment 3, Peggy and Alex start out with an easy substitution when they take the toy wrench to be a pliers, but just a few turn later they assign a *new* meaning to the same toy wrench and call it a thermometer now: Peggy asks: "this one?" and shows the wrench and Alex replies: "yes (.) that thermometer" (lines 90-92). Peggy and Alex thus show to be quite flexible in the symbolic substitutions they use in their play. The layering in the play interaction #3 is summarized in table 4.

Table 4. Layering in fragment 3: "Fixing the boat"

	Real world (layer 1)	*Play #3 (layer 2)*
Participants	*Peggy*	Piet
	Alex	Climbing-Piet
Roles	*Players at make-believe*	Piets fixing St. Nicolas' boat
Place	*Classroom, indoor climbing object*	At St. Nicolas' boat
Time	*Now*	Now (?)
Features/objects	*Climbing object*	St. Nicolas' boat
	Toy wrench	Pliers / thermometer
	Toy drill	Drill
Actions	*Holding drill to the balustrade*	Drilling
	Twisting toy pliers at the balustrade	Fixing the boat

2.5.4 Development of layering

The play in fragment 3, "Fixing the boat", differs from play #1, "You can eat that", in the way certain elements are interpreted at the pretend level. First of all, in the third play, Peggy and Alex take the new identities of 'Piet', whereas Peggy and Miss Laura were themselves in play #1. Also the definition of roles is different: in the first play Peggy and Miss Laura take the general routine roles of giver and taker and in the third play Peggy and Alex take the specific roles of Piets fixing St. Nicolas' boat. The location of the play is defined differently too: in the first play the classroom is redefined as a place where one can offer and eat food; in the third play climbing object in the classroom is reinterpreted as being a boat. The differences in layering between the first and the third play interaction are summarized in table 5. We make the development in layering more clear by adding play #2, "Daddy on the phone", as an intermediate level. In table 5 we show for each play interaction whether certain features are interpreted in the 2nd pretend level.

Table 5. Layering of the three pretend play episodes

	Play #1 *"You can eat that"* *Peggy 2;9*	*Play #2* *"Daddy on the phone"* *Peggy 3;1*	*Play #3* *"Fixing the boat"* *Peggy 3;4*
Participants	-*	-	+
Roles	--/+	-/+	+
Place	--/+	-/+	+
Time	-	-	- (?)
Features/objects	+	+	+
Actions	+	+	+

** Signs indicate whether or not the specific feature is interpreted at the 2nd pretend level*

Peggy and her interaction partners show substitution of features, objects and actions in all three plays. Apparently Peggy masters the layering of these features already at 2;9. We can see development in the layering of the participants: in the first two interactions Peggy, Miss Laura and Nicole are *themselves* in the play. In the third play, Peggy and Alex are not themselves, but they pretend to be Piets. Related to the layering of the participants, the roles gradually get more clear in these three plays. In play #1, Peggy and Miss Laura take the very general roles of giver and taker. In play #2, the roles are still general, but more specific than in the previous play: Peggy and Nicole are calling their parents, they are 'callers'. In play #3 the roles are specific: Peggy and Alex are Piet and Climbing Piet. The staging of the play gradually gets more substituted too. In play #1, the play takes place somewhere where food can be offered and eaten. Normally one does not eat during free play in preschool, which indicates that there is a substitution of place. But although the classroom is substituted for a place where one can offer and eat food, the substitution is not clearly specified. Place is slightly more specified in the second play: Peggy and Nicole are somewhere where they can call their parents. The third play has the most specified substituted place: Peggy and Alex are not on the climbing object in the classroom, but on St. Nicolas' boat. Place is layered in all three play interactions, because the play can not take place in the ordinary classroom with its ordinary features and rules, but the interactions differ is how specifically the 2nd meaning of place is realized. It is difficult to say something about time, possibly because Clark's interpretation of this feature is broad: it's about the setting of the entire play episode, not about use of past within the pretend world. The general timing of the play episode is often unspecified. Play interaction #3 has the most specific timing, because Saint Nicolas is only in the Netherlands for a couple of weeks in November and December. Peggy and Alex's

play takes place one day after Saint Nicolas returned to Spain, so the time of layer 1 seems to be more or less the same as the time of layer 2. However, in the absence of an explicit pretend narrative, it is difficult to place the pretend play in a different time than the current time, although it is a 'virtual' current time.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

To understand pretend play, children have to interpret actions, objects and events as pretence. The pretence is like a separate world within real world which gives different meanings to elements of the real world. A pretend interaction consists of frames or layers. The layeredness means that elements in the interaction have one meaning in the real world and another in the pretend world. Interaction partners know which meaning or interpretation to use during the interaction. The following elements of an interaction could be interpreted with a substituted meaning: *participants*, *roles*, *place*, *time*, *objects* and *actions*. In sociodramatic play, participants and roles get an explicit new interpretation. In early pretend play, children do not reinterpret characters in the pretend layer and they do not have specific reinterpretations for other elements of the situation like roles, time and place. In early pretend play only actions, objects and events are substituted or imagined and only local discourse identities are placed in the pretend layer. Later, children can take roles, which offers an orientation for what they can do in the interaction. In other words, by constructing situated identities in the pretend layer, children can create sociodramatic play.

The elements *participants, roles* and *place* are interpreted with a new meaning in sociodramatic play. Play interactions of Peggy from 2;9 to 3;4 years old show how play with symbolic substitution can develop into sociodramatic play. At a younger age, Peggy engages in pretend play, which is not sociodramatic play yet, because she does not use symbolic substitution for participants and roles. However, the beginnings of substitutions are seen in Peggy's pretend play interactions, especially in the elements *roles* and *place*. The interactions show how Peggy and her interaction partners can engage in pretend play where the roles and place do not have their real world meaning anymore, but do not have an explicit new meaning either.

The more complex pretend play becomes, the more interactional practices children will need to manage their play. One of the reasons for pretend play to become more complex is that children start to interpret not only local discourse acts but also situated identities in the pretend layer. The pretend situated identities help children to focus on a set of relevant actions. The more pretend elements are involved and the less routinized the play is, the more need will arise for directing and organizing the play by metacommunication. Specific characters, roles and situations are hard to establish by simple referring and showing. In addition, sociodramatic play

involves a more complex story, which means it takes more effort to keep individual play frames adapted to each other. In other words, early pretend play is relatively simple and structured because children only use their discourse identities in the pretend play and thus only assign a new meaning to objects and their local acts. When pretend play develops, children start to take roles and interpret their situated identities in the pretend layer. Situated identities allow for a range of possible acts and a sociodramatic story line. The pretend play interactions children have at younger ages form the basis for their later episodes of sociodramatic play.

Pretend play is a widely studied topic, but the transition from early forms of symbolic substitution into sociodramatic play is not often addressed. One possible relation between early play and later sociodramatic play is that early pretend play may be used as input for acting out a character role. In this paper we propose an alternative view of the relation between early play and later role play. We showed how early pretend play is extended and gradually builds up into sociodramatic play and thus how early pretense is the basis for sociodramatic play.